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EVENINGS ARE QUIETER IN THE FIRST YEAR OF "DO NOT CALL" LAW

BISMARCK – In the year since the state's "Do Not Call" list took effect, more than 60% of North Dakota telephone subscribers are enjoying peaceful evenings, says Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem.

The "Do Not Call" law prohibits most calls to consumers who have registered on the "do not call" list and restricts businesses and telemarketers from using prerecorded messages. Since the law took effect on August 1, 2003, the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division has received 239 consumer complaints relating to use of pre-recorded messages and 144 complaints about calls to telephone numbers on the "do not call" list.

The worst offender, with 75 consumer complaints, was Debt Management Foundation Services, Inc. The company used pre-recorded messages and inflated claims to peddle its credit counseling services to unsuspecting consumers. Stenehjem issued a Cease and Desist order against this company, which is now under investigation by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). Stenehjem also issued a Cease and Desist Order against Consumer Grants USA. The company operated a scam promising government grants for a fee, and called consumers registered on the "do not call" list.

"Telemarketers and businesses stand on notice that we will not tolerate deliberate violations of North Dakota's laws," said Stenehjem. "I encourage people to report any illegal calls to my office so that we can take enforcement action to stop the calls. We appreciate your help in telling us about the violations."

Forty-two investigations have been initiated against companies making illegal calls. In some cases, multiple investigations led to the same company. The consumer protection division has obtained settlements from 13 companies totaling \$14,000, and 15 investigations are still pending.

Consumers who receive pre-recorded messages or telemarketing calls more than 90 days after registering on the "Do Not Call" list can contact the Consumer Protection division at 1-800-472-2600. Consumers should provide as much information as possible, including the name and phone number of the telemarketing company, the name of the person calling, and the date and time of the call.